

The Alchemical Mind-Set

Alchemy...., it is difficult to decided exactly what one should talk about in a subject so vast. Alchemy is indeed the mother of all sciences as her tenants find expression from geometry, art, medicine, psychology, physics and so on.

My desire today is to communicate to you how alchemy has developed in me, from my mind-set, to physical manipulations in the laboratory. In no way does this mean, my reasoning and conclusions are the definitive word on the subject. There is a sneaking suspicion growing within me, that during this composition of this paper, many more questions than answers will be put forward. But this is the way that it should be, for in each question lies an answer, the realizing of which, moves us inexorably up the ladder of wisdom and knowledge.

What is alchemy? The phrase "alchemy is the process of bringing natural substances to their inherent perfection, through natural means" has been used by quite a few people, myself included. This is a catchy little phrase but just what does it mean. The above statement implies that there is a so called unnatural way to realize the inherent perfection in natural substances. One would not be too far off the mark to say, that in the minds of most people, dropping a red substance into molten lead, and turning it into gold, does not fall into the category of a natural act. What just does one mean by natural? Can it not be said that in the truest sense, any act or substance is natural ?

Describing alchemy as a process that elevates or spiritualizes implies that at some time there was a state of inferior being. In the story of creation you do not read "and God saw it was bad". The concept that somehow at this present moment in time we lack perfection or have some tint of unworthiness within us, is the root of our problems, in alchemy, and in life. The spiritual perfection idealized and desired in the minds of many people today is a state of extreme unnaturalness. It is a almost zombie like state in which there are no problems, anger, and sexual desire is ended. This last one is the deepest mystery to me, especially since the placing of libido in a subject, was the culmination of any of Gods manifestative acts.

For me, "Alchemy is, the Art of Realizing the Perfection of Life". I say realize, not discover, or make. When you realize something, you gain understanding or grasp, of that which is. Realizing the perfection of something, implies that there is a completeness or wholeness to its existence, and that any appearance to the contrary lies in the observer, not the observed. Yes, alchemy is about bringing into perpetual conscious realization, the unique inter-relatedness and wholeness of creation. But not in some obfuscating release in which we lose our identities. If we look around us it is apparent that God is in the business of manifestation. Truly all that is manifest by God is good. This realization of life's perfection, of Gods beneficent grace begins with the acceptance of our seeming imperfections. This acceptance is not acquiescence, it is not saying that one can never realize something different than what they know now. The paradox is that even though the immediate expression of life we see before our eyes is perfect, complete and whole. This expression of life invariably gives rise to cognition of seemingly more complete and whole states of being. By the very nature of its design, life continually plays a game of one-upmanship with itself.

In a word alchemy is Life. The question must be asked exactly what is life ? Is it found only in that which can eat, breathe and reproduce. Or is there is life, is there spirit, just because a thing is ? The thought that the normal state of any element with its signature electron configuration, is a manifestation of consciousness, might seem far fetched to some. Is this because the element is dead, or because its normal activity happens in a realm below our conscious level ? If consciousness can be defined as being sensitive or aware of something, then can it not be said that because an element reacts in a predictable fashion, under differing conditions, either alone or in combination with other elements, that a state of consciousness is shown. Indeed these same elements take in energy absorbing background and cosmic radiation, using what they need and expelling the excess. To many persons today this train of thought is scandalous to say the least. Yet if you ask these same persons if they believe in God they will tell you yes. If you ask them to ascribe attributes to God they will invariably say "God is omnipresent".

Omnipresent..... If you ask the common man to describe or give some hint of what omnipresence means, they will tell you God is everywhere. Pressed further they will give examples of the presence of God being in a tree, rock, water, animals or creation as a whole. It is interesting that generally none of these persons use themselves as an example of Gods Omnipresence.

Alchemists have employed all sorts of names down through history to describe what they call "Our Mercury". They have described it as a water, spirit, milk of the universe etc. Philosophers say that all things were produced from this One thing by adaptation. Indeed the sages say, Our Mercury can be found everywhere and that it is trampled under foot and despised by the common man. I can remember when I began alchemy I desperately searched for this substance. I would distill all manner of things trying to capture it, to acquire it.

If alchemy is so hard to understand and do, it is not necessarily because of its procedures, which even the philosophers call women and children's work. No it is hard because of its seeming hermetic seal. This seal is none other than the truth told boldly and declared openly in plain terms. There is no need for subterfuge on the part of the philosopher, the mind of the everyday man will create the veil on its own. That which is least understood or seen, is the simple truth right under your nose. This applies especially to Our Mercury.

Who would not like to capture and control a substance that can penetrate the densest of objects and overcome all subtle things. What a prize to lock into a test tube and show ones colleagues. To be in possession of this substance, one would indeed be able to peer back to the beginning of creation, and understand how it all began. While this is true of Our Mercury, you will try, I believe, in vain, if you think it is solely an operation of separating and purifying it, from a earthly container. It does not strike me as absurd to put forward that God is the true and Universal Mercury. For any designation given by the common man to God fits our Mercury like a glove.

This brings us back to the omnipotence and immortality of God. For most people saying this is a mere intellectual exercise, in tenants of God handed down blindly and emptily from generation to generation. If this were not the case then modern man would not have the fear of death it has. Instead of saying that God is omnipresent and all that other jazz, lets look at it from a different view point. We have in this modern day allowed science and technology to become elevated to almost a status of a religion.

When one comes down to it all any of us are is what is termed as matter. Our bodies are made

solely from it, our food we eat, and the clothes we wear, and every thing else is matter. In fact even our thoughts or emotions which are forms of matter - conscious radiant matter - can be measured and seen by devices like the EEG, and MRI. To the scientist matter is matter, irrespective of it being in the solid, liquid, gas, or thermal state. Lets face it, you can dissect a thing, dice it, slice it, bombard it with all sorts of things, break it down to smaller and smaller sub-atomic particles, and you still end up with matter, or better put, energy. I believe that one of the main tenants in any science is that matter can never be destroyed or created, only rearranged. Think about that for a moment. If you firmly believe this to be true, if you accept it with out question, then what you are truly saying is that there is no death. You are saying, you are immortal because you agree that all there is in the universe is this one thing called matter, and truly all there is of you is this One thing.

In the mind of the modern man this fact takes on a somewhat reassuring stance. I say somewhat reassuring because in the mind of most people they connote their entire existence, their entire state of being with their bodies. Yes it is nice new age syrupy thought to say that we are one with the circle of life. That when we die our bodies will produce grass thereby completing and starting a cycle of life. Ahhhh..... what a nice, deserved rest. It is quite another thing if one imagines themselves being eaten alive by a wild beast and the inevitable occurrence of what had once been their body being excreted through that lower animals anus in a day or two. Quite another thing indeed. When faced with such an image most people would say you can keep you dammed circle of life to yourself, I see no cosmic harmony in me being the droppings of a wild beast. To the person who defines the sum total of their existence by their body indeed this is a ghastly and frightening end.

The question here is if we end, when our bodies end ? Does the radiant energy of our consciousness cease when the chemical activity of our brains stops ? Or does it go on ? It was said earlier that God was in the business of manifestation. From my point of view he went to an awful lot of trouble to make manifest the known universe. So exacting and detailed was his image of this universe that he even took the trouble to make manifest me. What need would God have for me to be here ? Now there is a novel concept, God needs us. When growing up God was introduced to me as a vengeful, jealous being, that sat in this far off place called heaven. The only need one could see God had for us was in the sport of tormenting his creations. The view of God that had been passed down blindly for generations in my family was one in which God imbued man with natural inclinations that all had to be overcome to reach a state of spirituality. It is to say the least a very depressing view of existence. My heart aches for persons who still cling to this misshapen image of God. Especially the fact that God is far off in heaven, that he is distant from us, cut off from us by the so called original sin.

In my opinion God has never been separate from man, it is a illusion borne in the human mind when viewing its environment. I think therefore I am. I am not that tree, I am separate from it, distinct from, there is no visible connection between it and myself. With this train of thought how can anyone blame a person if they feel that the omnipresence of God includes everything except themselves.

Hermetic philosophy contains another view of God for those who wish to cultivate it and reason it out to its logical conclusions. It teaches about a universe in which its totality is God, not a separate entity created by God. This was brought home to me by a mentor of mine when he asked me the following question. What could possibly compel a being that is complete within

itself to have to make manifest something. Can it be that God is motivated by desire. ?

Looking at our own lives this same creative desire or need can be seen. Irrespective of what you call the original impetus, it is there none the less. Following your passion is what hopefully drove you to pursue your career.

But a desire to create would be an empty thing indeed if all it did was move us inexorably in that direction. There must be some other half to this impulse, this creative desire. In my mind this other half is simply the satisfaction of fulfillment one receives at the culmination of the creative act. The joy and pride any of us feel after the travail of bringing into manifestation that which was once just a thought, is never completely captured by words. That feeling, even if it last for just a moment, is truly one of bliss. Could it be that God also feels these same things ? Would it be to far off the mark to say that indeed God felt this bliss, this joy, at the time of my or anyone else's manifestation.

If God is motivated by desire and finds satiation in the culmination of the creative act, it would not be off the mark to say the fundamental impetus of manifestation is that of love. And if our joy in the pride of the accomplishment of the creative act is a mirror of that which God feels. Can it not also be said that our desires too, are but a mirror, a duplication of the original Divine impulse ?

If truly all things are one, and we find within ourselves an exact mirror of that which manifested us, then perhaps the difficulty in finding Our Mercury has stemmed from us looking for it everywhere and in all manner of things, except within ourselves.

It is not my intention to imply that we are Gods, or are developing into Gods. We all are individualized, eternal, expressions, of the Divine Will. Individual souls are like musical compositions. The essence of the music, its notes, its melody, stay the same eternally. Play the music in classical, jazz, or R&B styles', and it would still be recognizable as that particular piece of music. Because we are composed of the being of God, and know there is but only One Will, no more makes us Divine Providence, than a piece of music being played, make it the musician.

What is important here is how we see ourselves and our relation to the universe. Sight is indeed the determining factor of our interaction with the universe. The old philosophers speak of Our Sulphur with almost as many names as Our Mercury. If Mercury is cold neutral and still, then Our Sulphur is radiant, positive, and on the move. For me Our Sulphur is analogous to the light of the cosmos.

Light is the way that the universe was brought into manifestation. True the universe always existed with God, but in a state that was without form and void. What makes light so special ? Is it just the outcome of a photon meeting with some form of resistance ? Or is it, in its truest sense memory.

If all the universe existed in God prior to manifestation, then can we not say that manifestation is a reflection of that which is ? If this is so, then the known universe is but a reflection of the perfection and wholeness that is God, it is a declaration of Gods complete knowledge of himself.

When we see a green leaf are we seeing the leaf, or its reflection ? Indeed the light given off by the leaf must travel too, and be coordinated within our brains, thereby recreating an exact replica

of the leaf within our minds. So what is reflection but duplication. Duplication is nothing more than making an exact copy of that which is, and an exact copy of a thing, is, in its truest sense, memory.

Light is memory. This train of thought has fascinated me for some time. How much of our perceptions to the world around us and our reactions to it, are just set patterns of memory, knee jerk reactions, stored in what occultist call the race mind or race memory.

Light is memory, but it is also manifestative agent of God. It is with light that we fill the holes of perception and experience. Pouring it in to our minds eye to flesh out and make the unknown, familiar.

Early on in my hermetic training I was given as homework the task of watching my thought processes throughout the day. After sometime of doing this, something rather fascinating about myself became apparent. It was not that this thing was extraordinary in anyway, in fact it happened with such routine manner, that its occurrence was more a sub-conscious act, than a self-conscious one. It was noticed that invariably when meeting new people, either in business or passing them on the street, my mind would immediately begin filling the image reflected to it with a personality of my own design. From the most superficial of observances, I would decide that this person was feeling a particular way, had a particular disposition and so on. The point of this exercise was not to assign good or evil attributes to the mental imagery. The point was to notice how the creative process in all of us works. How easily we color the perception of our environment, by, in many cases replacing what is, with reflexive, ingrained, patterns of a set of assumptions, and collection of beliefs about ourselves, our environment and the relationship between the two. Indeed these assumptions and beliefs might be called the piling on of matter.

Armed with this knowledge of The Oneness of life, of the creative process and his position in it, the alchemist must confront what at times is a very frightening world. Indeed to many people Our Salt, is not a flavor enhancer, but a device of torture.

The alchemist knows Hermetic wisdom states, that every manifestation in the universe has love as its fundamental impetus. That any appearance to the contrary is due to a lack of understanding on the part of the onlooker. He knows this vision of evil, actually originates from within him. A better way to put this is that acceptance of the illusion gives form and credibility to that which is a lie. It is not my intention to imply that what our senses report to us should be ignored. What is being said is that what is reported by the senses, is not the entire truth. The universe, is the being of God, and God never created anything that is inimical to its own nature.

Evil, or what is popularly believed as such, is probably the greatest tool that God has, for it is our most prolific teacher in life. The appearance of disharmony or discord in a thing is always what spurs us on to make it right. In fact it might be said that the manifestation of disharmony is Gods way of making us aware that there is something he wishes to express through us. Something beautiful he wishes to manifest into the world. Invariably the view of disharmony will create in the mind of the observer a view that mitigates what has been observed.

Evil, in and of itself is a lie, and does not exist, yet the old Qabalist warn us not to deny the existence of evil. For a long time I had a problem with coming to terms with this apparent paradox. The best I can come up with is the example of $2 + 2 = 3$. Everyone knows that this

statement is a lie. Yet we can see it, and move our fingers over the printed form. In this respect the world of matter is the world of illusions and lies. On this plane that which is not, believes itself to be, and it will beseech you to accept its existence. Yet it truly is not because it has no lawful basis or foundation in the archetypal, creative and formative worlds, because it is not true, it is a lie, it never was.

One of my mentors stated to me that Christ was able to cure the sick and maimed not because he fixed something that was broken but because he saw and affirmed the truth behind form, the true nature of our being. Which simply is this, that the universe, is divine in origin and what we call matter is created, and sustained through the mental imagery of God. It is said that when the alchemist reaches a state of adept-hood, his will, is one with the One Will. He is then able to control the currents of the life-force and negate any appearance of disharmony before him. Until this state is reached the admonition of the old qabalists should be heeded. Or as the Rolling Stones would say "I'll stick my knife right down your throat baby and it hurts !"

The view the alchemist has is one that is radically different from that of the everyday man. He realizes the depth and breadth of his powers of vision to effect change, but he also understands his vision is not utopia for the world. You can not hammer or preach the hermetic science into someone, it is a discipline that must be undertaken voluntarily, because it requires the active conscious participation of the individual. The alchemist knows that eventually all expression of the Divine Will, will undertake this interior journey of return. His vision of the truth allows him to look with expectant confidence at all things and find the realization of the eternal splendor of the Divine Will.

This brings us to the theme of "conscious intent" and the manipulation of circumstance and matter. The premise of all this is simple and is stated something like this. All matter in the three kingdoms of nature that is not on a level of conciseness equal to that of self-consciousness experienced by man is considered to be in the domain of sub-consciousness. Sub-consciousness itself uses deductive reasoning, and is amenable to suggestion (control) from self consciousness.

The Art of Alchemy is not content with just bottling the sun, its true aim is to cause a dawning of realization in the conscious mind of man about his true nature. Again I have to point out that this is not a merely intellectual exercise, it is rooted in a altered perception of reality. This shifted perception is borne from the alchemist placing his habitual daily actions and thought patterns under the most intense scrutiny. When this is done the seeker finds themselves realizing that their daily experiences are actually populated with events that have taken on a flavoring or tinting extrapolated from their habitual thought patterns. They will in fact be amazed to find that many of their life's experiences are borne from their most vividly intense mental imagery and are uncomfortably close to being carbon copies of this habitual imagery.

In the end this exercise develops faith and plants the seed thought which is the basis for the radical shift in perception I have been speaking about. This is especially potent I think, if the individual has been using their innate ability to create from mental imagery improperly, and the life they see before them is a living hell. I say this because, when the correlation between thought and experience is realized consciously, sub-consciousness simply deduces the following. If my habitual negative thought patterns have created my present undesirable environment, then habitual positive patterns of thought will create a desirable environment. When this happens the alchemist steps into a new world, filled with possibilities he never before dared to dream of. This

creates an attitude that is in almost every way, contrary to the natural man. Conscious intent now takes on much deeper meaning. Combine this with the use of sound and color as Qabalah teaches and you step onto the threshold of science that postulates that there are chemical reactions which can only be instigated by the conscious trained mind.

This is the crucial difference between alchemy and Spagyria™. While it is true that the spagyric technique is the foundation of the alchemical art, at least as far as the manual operations go. Every spagyric product is definitely not alchemical. There is a little debate brewing in certain circles as to which particular method of preparing herbal products deserves to be called truly spagyric. Fundamentally Spagyria™ is separation, purification and recombination of the matter being worked on. By itself the operation is very Newtonian or mechanistic, but when combined with the other two branches of hermetic science it becomes something much more. What alchemy does is to take the spagyric processes a step further, it demands an interaction between the alchemist and his matter. This interaction is brought about by "conscious intent".

The very fact that the alchemist perceives that he is able to interact with his matter on the most basic of levels, sets up a relationship with the matter, that is just not present in the mind of a mechanistic worker. The view the alchemist foresters is one of an organic, living, symbiosis between he and his matter. Because of this he will take great pains to produce by hand (art) all of the ingredients used in preparing his Magistery. This includes the collection of water used in the fermentation processes, solve and coagulates of the salt etc. The alchemist does this because he wishes to nurture the etheric vitality found in his subject, indeed he seeks to increase its virtue. This relationship starts out as a merely intellectual exercise, but as time goes on the work changes the practitioner. A fundamental shift occurs in the consciousness of the alchemist, and his perception of the world changes. He realizes that the fundamental impetus that God uses to continually create and sustain the universe is love. He also realizes that because God is omnipresent, so too is the original creative impetus of love omnipresent. It is this energy, this chi, this life force, that the alchemist seeks to incorporate into his products.

Yes "Alchemy is the Art of Realizing the Perfection of Life". This realization is the processes of unfoldment that happens to the alchemist consciousness as he does this work. Slowly he/she begins to realize the true nature of their being. When this happens the alchemist realizes that what he once considered as his "personal" volition, is actually a vehicle of expression through which the One Will works to bring about manifestation.

With all that has been said above in consideration there are some fundamental precepts that should be in the mind of the alchemist about himself and his environment. These are:

1. No person or object can become anymore spiritual or perfect than what they are right now. All that is possible is more profound understanding of that which is.
2. Irrespective of whether or not it is called matter, energy, spirit, or God, there is nothing other than this One thing, from which arise the multifarious forms of manifestation.
3. As this One thing is all there is, it must have always contained all that has, is, and will be manifested. This includes the focused expression of the Divine will we call our souls. All manifestation exist at once, and continually, in God.
4. There are two main tenants one should deduce concerning this One thing. The first is that

no matter what you do to it, this One thing will always be present. Thus it is immortal. The second is that since there is nothing which can be done to it that would hurt, impair or destroy it, there must be nothing manifested that is inimical to it.

5. The manifestative act is born in God from love. It is on the one hand the deepest most profound desire, meet with the absolute fulfillment of that desire.
6. The creative act is a mental act. It is a reflection based on Gods complete and perfect knowledge of himself.
7. All of our desires and creative impulses have their origin in the Divine Will's need for expression.
8. Mans creative process is analogous - but to a lesser degree - as that used by God.
9. Mans relation to his environment, is dependent on how he perceives that environment. A good deal of our day to day experiences are brought on by the creative mental imagery each of us generates day after day. Indeed opposite reactions can be brought about by identical causes. Each reaction set off by the sight of the viewer, and the associative memories contained within it. The question is whether or not the mental imagery produced is that of sub-conscious patterns or self-conscious patterns.
10. Man can change his environment by changing the way he views it.

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